

TITLE

A system and method for multi-access

TECHNICAL FIELD OF THE INVENTION

- 5 The invention relates to a system and a method allowing a moving user terminal to simultaneously access a plurality of access networks which may have different network technologies. An access selector selects networks according to the ABC (always best connected) concept.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

- 10 Future mobile systems are expected to support multiple radio access technologies, as well as diverse types of user equipments, including mobile phones, personal digital assistants (PDA), laptops, as well as wireless personal area networks, moving networks and vehicular networks.

- Refer to Fig. 1 which illustrates a future scenario which illustrates a vehicular network
- 15 1, for example Ethernet onboard a bus, A non shown passenger has a personal local network (PAN) 2 to which a mobile phone and digital camera are connected. Another non shown passenger has also a PAN 3 to which an audio equipment and a video camera are connected. The PANs are wireless connected to an on-board wireless gateway WG that provides connectivity to an access router AR of a 4G wireless
- 20 network or an access router of a wireless local area network (WLAN) 5, which in its turn provides connectivity to an access router of a land based IP backbone network 6. A 3G network 7 is also connected to the backbone network. A lap top is wireless connected to the 3G network. Vehicle movements entail hand-over for the vehicle WG, but may remain entirely hidden to passengers.

- 25 The term *always best connected* (ABC) in multi-access networks refers to the concept of defining a set of access selection criteria and mechanisms that allow users to get connected to various services in a nearly optimal manner irrespective of the terminal type [1]. For instance, in the vehicular network the on-board WG provides cellular connectivity through 2.5/3G cellular technologies to the 4G wireless
- 30 network 4 on the country-side while it provides cellular connectivity while it provides connectivity to the wireless local area network 5 while at a central bus station. It is important to note that in such a situation, passengers may want to select access in

order to being 'best' connected, even though they may use, for instance, an Ethernet interface from their respective user equipments to get connected to the WG.

Therefore, these types of vehicular or moving network scenarios can be thought of as 'multi-hop' scenarios in terms of the number of layer-2 (L2) connections between the end-user equipment and the access router (AR) of the IP-based backbone network..
In such an environment it is a non-trivial issue how information about QoS can be provided to a QoS aware access selection algorithm which runs in an access selector of the user terminal.

DESCRIPTION OF RELATED ART

Access selection has been the topic of intensive research recently; see for instance [2], where a multi-access architecture and associated decision algorithm based on QoS parameters (Quality of Service) are proposed. Figure 2 shows the architecture proposed in [2]. A multimode terminal (MMT) 8 is capable of operating in three access networks; a satellite access network 9, a UMTS access network, and a GPRS access network. The MMT comprises terminal equipment (TE) 12, such as a laptop or any handheld terminal, a terminal interworking unit (T-IWU) 13, and three access specific mobile terminals 14-16. The T-IWU keeps track of the availability of access networks, is involved in all inter-access mobility procedures and cooperates with the access specific mechanisms for providing quality of service (QoS) over the multi-access network. Using certain parameters, including the condition of the radio coverage, and QoS perceived by the user, the MMT continuously executes procedures with the objective of selecting the most suitable access network. Any modification to said parameters leads to a change of access network. In order to ensure minimal modifications to the access systems most of the intelligence of the system is placed in the terminal.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The known MMT comprises different access technologies. By definition the MMT will thus be technology dependent. This implies that if a novel access system is introduced on the market, then modifications must be made within the MMT.

The access selection algorithm used in the MMT operates directly on layer 2 (L2) parameters which makes the algorithm itself technology dependent. This means that

if a novel access system is introduced on the market, then the algorithm must be redesigned.

An application need to be aware of the access technology used in the access network if the access selection algorithm described in [2] is used. Application
5 programmers often forget to program the necessary access information into the application. The user must then configure the application, a task which many users are not familiar with.

The present invention also offers a solution on the following problem: Passengers traveling in a vehicle need to be able to select the radio access network that provides
10 connectivity from the vehicle's wireless gateway or, if the passenger's user terminal is equipped with a wireless interface, directly from the user terminal to the access router of a radio access network. Passengers are assumed to have user terminals that do not have information about the available accesses from the vehicle's wireless gateway.

15 The main object of the present invention is to provide a system and method for access selection which is independent on the technology used in the access networks. An access technology independent access selector is completely unaware of the technology and QoS parameters used in layer 2 and beneath, which is a main advantage of the invention. Other advantages achieved with the invention are that no
20 modifications of the access selector or of the access algorithm need to be done if new access technology is introduced in access networks. An application which uses a technology independent access selector requires no access specific information included in its software. These advantages are achieved with the invention defined in claim 1 and claim 13.

25 The advantage achieved with claim 2 is that an application need not be aware of the access technologies, neither of the access selection adapters; it is sufficient an application has an interface with the spanning layer. In other words, access technologies and access selection adapters are transparent to the applications.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

30 Fig. 1. is a network view illustrating a moving IP based network which connects to different radio access networks along its route,

Fig. 2. is a block diagram of a known multimode terminal

- Fig. 3. is a block diagram illustrating a first embodiment of a system in accordance with the invention,
- Fig. 4. is a block diagram illustrating a second embodiment of a system in accordance with the invention,
- 5 Fig. 5. is a schematic view illustrating how the system generates wireless hints,
- Fig. 6. is a functional view of an implementation of an access selector in accordance with the invention and a general access technology dependent access selection adapter,
- Fig. 7. illustrates an access selector and its input parameters,
- 10 Fig. 8. discloses an access selection algorithm,
- Fig. 9. is a graph illustrating the behaviors of the log functions used in the access selection algorithm,
- Fig. 10. illustrates a UMTS mobile network, and
- Fig. 11. is a layered view of the bearer services of the UMTS mobile network of Fig. 10.
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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

The system of the invention shown in Fig 3 comprises a vehicular network 17 to which a plurality of user terminals (UTs) may connect. In Fig. 3 only one user terminal is shown at 18 for clarity reasons. The vehicular network can connect to a number of radio access networks 19, 20 each of which has an individual access technology. The access networks are connected to a backbone network 21. There may be more access networks than the two shown. In order to connect to an access network the vehicular network comprises wireless gateways 22, 23, one for each type of access network technology. Wireless gateway 22 is thus adapted for access to an access router AR of access network 19, which uses access technology 1, over an air interface 24. Wireless gateway 23 is adapted for access to another access router AR of access network 20, which uses access technology 2, over another air interface 25. In the following the wireless gateways will be referred to as access selection adapters since they comprise novel hardware and software entities that provide access technology independent information used by an access selector 26 for access selection.

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The access selection adapters 22, 23 may simultaneously have access to their respective access networks. The vehicular network will in this respect behave like a multi-mode terminal.

As the vehicular network moves it will shift its accesses from one set of networks to another set of networks. As seen from the backbone network a moving vehicular network behaves like a mobile terminal shifting its connection from one access router to another; in successive handover processes.

On-board user terminals make use of several on-board access technologies, such as a local Ethernet, Bluetooth or WLAN to access the respective access selection adapters.

In the embodiment shown in Fig. 3 the access selector is a network element connected to each of the access networks and to the backbone network.

In the embodiment shown in Fig. 4 the access selector 26 is no network entity but is housed in the user terminal 18. The user terminal also comprises the access selection adapters 23, 23 and its translators and access managers. The access selector is connected to each one of the access selection adapters. The entities shown in Fig. 4 are the same as those shown in Fig. 3 and have therefore been indicated with the same reference designations. Note that the user terminal has direct wireless connection to the access networks and that it is not connected to a moving vehicular network. The user terminal is moving. An application may use one access network simultaneously as another application is using another access network and the terminal is called a multi-access mobile terminal.

Having described two general systems, the details thereof will now be described.

Applications

The user terminal comprises a number of applications 27. When an application is installed on the terminal the user is typically asked for configuration preferences, such as default preference for which access to use when the user is at home, what kind of subscription the user has, in which cases the user as an example may reply with ADSL as preferred access and gold (or silver) as subscription type. All preferences given by the user are stored in a configuration database 28. When later an application executes, the run time part of the application need not concern itself with the configuration information, since this information will automatically be

delivered from the data base to the entities which require this information. Has an application programmer forgotten to request the user to provide his preferences, it is possible for the application to use the preferences stored by a similar application in the database. The user may for example give his preference to use a minimum bit rate of 150 kbit/s for one video application. Another video application, in which the programmer has forgotten to ask for the user's preferred bit rate, may then use this value of 150 kbit/s.

It should be noted that an application does not care about the access technology used, be it UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunications System), UTRAN (UMTS Terrestrial Radio Access Network) or any other 3rd or future 4th generation mobile system. Delay, however, is of concern for an application, and this and similar parameters will be touched upon in connection with the description of so called wireless hints.

QoS controllers

A quality of service (QoS) controller 29 in the user terminal has as its most important task to generate the requirements an application has on transport quality all the way from source to destination. A video application may for example require a minimum bandwidth and a maximum delay for transmission of a movie from a remote contents database in the backbone network to the user terminal. These QoS related requirements are access technology independent information called **wireless hints** and comprise a set of QoS related parameters (all of which are independent of the used access technology). The wireless hints of an individual application will in the following be called the **QoS profile** of the application. The QoS profile generated by QoS controller 29 is communicated to the access selector and is used therein as a first set of inputs upon which it bases its selection of access network.

A similar QoS controller 30 is resident in each of the access selection adapters. It is recalled that an individual access selection adapter is associated with a specific access network and the main task of the QoS controller 30 is to receive as input access technology dependent QoS related information (parameters) and map them to access technology independent **status information**. The status information generated by a QoS controller 30 is communicated to the access selector and is used therein as a second set of inputs upon which it bases its selection of access network.

Translators

A translator 31 is program software is access technology dependent. It understands messages and access specific parameters therein as received from an associated access manager 32. It translates messages and parameters received from its
5 associated access network into QoS parameters which it transmits to its associated QoS controller 30 wherein they are mapped to the access technology independent status information for transmission to the access selector.

As an example, if the access network is PSTN, then the translator must understand the SS7 (Signal System No. 7) protocol, such as the four call phases on hook, call
10 set up, transmission phase and tear down, and the signals associated with these phases such as number taking, ring signal, ring tone etc. and must provide QoS parameters on the access technology.

Access managers

The access manager 32 handles connection set up, connection tear down, error
15 coding and every process as required by its associated access network. It also provides a QoS description to its associated translator. It may also contain a resource manager. The access manager sets up the access bearer service towards its respective access network. In order to be able to set up the bearer service the access manager needs the wireless hints mentioned under QoS controller 29. The
20 access manager receives so called **layer 2 trigger** signals (L2 triggers for short) from its associated access network. An L2 trigger indicates that there has been a change in the access network, for example that the signal strength between the access network and the corresponding access selection adapter has changed, for example decreased below a minimum level. An L2 trigger may also indicate when the access
25 network becomes available for a moving terminal or moving network; it then signals "Hello, I'm available now and can provide my connection services". An L2 trigger is signaled to the access selector and may cause it to order a change of access network.

A network bearer service describes how a given network provides QoS. It is defined
30 by a signaling protocol, a user plane transport and QoS management functions.

Access network

Examples of access networks are UMTS, UTRAN, wireless LAN, CDMA-2000,

PSTN.

Backbone network

Examples are Internet and an operator's network.

Access selector

- 5 The access selector selects access network based on an application's QoS profile and the network's status information. The access selector contains an access selection algorithm 33 which based on the first and second sets of inputs decides access network to be used for an individual application. The access selector is independent of the technology used in the access networks. It is embodied in the
- 10 form of program software and a de-multiplexer. An access network may broadcast its status information. An access selection adapter may also probe its associated network to obtain status information.

Communication

- 15 The access selection adapters comprises a protocol spanning the access networks and the backbone network and the access selector, thus allowing interoperation between an application and an end terminal connected to the backbone network and making the access adapters transparent to the applications. Preferably an "all IP" technology is used. The protocols used for transmission of QoS profiles, status information, L2 triggers, and decision of access network, are the IPv4 and IPv6
- 20 protocol suits.

It should be noted that a user terminal may have direct wireless access to an access router of an access network, overriding the vehicular network.

- In Fig. 3 and 4 the protocol used for communication between the QoS controller 29 in the user terminal and the access specific QoS controllers 30 is the IP signaling
- 25 protocol proposed by the NSIS working group of the IETF, this protocol being called NSIS-protocol for short which is described in reference [3].

Access selection procedure

Step 1

- During Step 1 the access selector collects input to its access selection algorithm in response to the start of an application in the user terminal. The user terminal uses IP
- 30 level QoS signaling to communicate the QoS profile and other preferences of the

started application to the access selector. It is assumed here that the user terminal knows the IP address of the access selector.

In addition, the access networks that are available to the vehicular network provide status information and make such information available to the access selector using

5 IP level QoS signaling.

In the embodiment shown in Fig. 3 the access selector is directly connected to the access networks and therefore such status information can be directly communicated to the access selector for example by using an access network specific interface towards the access selector.

10 In the embodiment shown in Fig. 4 where the access selector is housed in the user terminal the access selector uses an IP level interface only and is for example connected to the backbone network as a selector server entity. Also access networks have to use IP level signaling to transport status information to the access selector. In this latter case it is assumed the access network is capable of performing (1)
15 translating access specific information to IP level information elements and (2) using IP level signaling towards the access selector.

The QoS profile as well as the status information can be updated periodically or on an 'event basis'. For instance, when the access technology provides L2 triggers, a L2 trigger signal can entail an IP level signal to the access selector, said L2 trigger
20 containing information about the changes in the access network status, for example that the network connection has been degraded or improved.

Step 2

During Step 2 the access selector executes the access selection algorithm that attempts to find the 'best' access in terms of the QoS parameters given in the QoS
25 profile associated with the application and possibly also given by other metrics. The output of this process is the identification of the access network that should be used by the application.

Step 3

During Step 3 the access selector communicates the access decision to the user
30 terminal. For this purpose, the access selector uses IP level QoS signaling. Once the user terminal obtains this information, it instructs the associated access selection

adapter to set up and configure the access technology specific radio bearer. At this stage, the application is ready to use the selected access for user data transport.

Once an access network has been selected a radio bearer service need to be configured therein according to the QoS profile and other requirements set by the user as will be explained further down. This configuration is done by the access manager associated with the selected access network. As an example, suppose the selected access network is UMTS, the proper UMTS attach procedure and the packet data protocol (PDP) context signaling have to be performed.

In the Fig. 3 embodiment of the system the QoS profile and access decision is for example communicated to the access selector over an 'old' access, that is an access previously used by the application, or is broadcasted in the selected access network.

Wireless hints

Fig. 5 illustrates how wireless hints are generated by the QoS controller 29. A user 34 is in control of the QoS (of an application) at the human level. The QoS can be high, medium or low as selected by the user by clicking or pressing a corresponding button 35 appearing on the terminal display.

Below the human level is an application level at which the application executes. The application is configured from the database 28. The application signals to other entities, for example to a web server 24 connected to the backbone network as shown in Fig. 3, and uses the SIP protocol for this (Session Initiating Protocol). Information elements appearing in the SIP protocol may be used as wireless hints.

Below the application level is the terminal's operative system which described in very general and incomplete terms comprises a kernel 36, the QoS controller 29 and a database 37 that contains QoS preferences set by the user or a system operator. Examples of such preferences are "Pictures should be displayed with high resolution" and "preferred transmission rate is 64 kbit/s".

The preferences selected by the user, the preferences stored in the data base 37 and those in data base 28 as well as selected SIP information elements are all communicated to the QoS controller 29 which assembles them and generate the wireless hints which are signaled to the access selector using an IP QoS protocol, such as NSIS. This wireless hint signaling is illustrated by arrow 38.

A wireless hint shall hint the access selector of the QoS to be used for transmission of user data over the air. The QoS parameters used as wireless hints need to be straightforward for the applications (and the application programmers) to set, a basic requirement is that these parameters must be as simple as possible in terms of interpretation and how their values should be determined. This requirement suggests that these types of "wireless hints" should be qualitative rather than quantitative. For instance, we propose an "expected delay bound" parameter that provides a hint whether the application is delay sensitive or not, rather than requiring an exact value to be set. Since the parameter is qualitative, it can even be set by other entities (e.g. by a SIP signaling entity as described above) rather than requiring the application programmer or the human user to set/configure them. On the other hand, the parameters should help resource scarce (typically wireless and cellular) link resource managers to configure the wireless resources and QoS.

Suitable wireless hints are based on the Controlled Load (CL) integrated service parameters, as defined by RFC 2211. The CL service is intended to support a broad class of applications including adaptive real-time applications and it thus provides a reasonable base for defining the information elements. However, the wireless network characteristics and requirements must differ from typical wire-line interfaces and additional information is needed. Thus, it is proposed to extend the CL service with optional parameter information that will be useful for wireless networks to enable appropriate settings for the radio bearer characteristics. It is noted that although this optional information is proposed for the CL service, it may also be applied to other services e.g. Guaranteed Quality of Service.

Examples of wireless hints are: control load parameters, media description parameters using the Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions (MIME) as standardized by the IETF, packet format information, expected delay bound, packet loss ratio, bit error rate (BER), packet handling priority, packet loss ratio (PLR).

QoS parameters in a QoS profile may change quickly over time and therefore a QoS profile is of a dynamic character.

Further to wireless hints a QoS profile may include signal strength, signal quality, delay, service precedence, reliability, mean throughput and peak throughput, cost and available bandwidth and combinations thereof.

Fig. 6 illustrates an implementation of a user terminal 18 and a generalized access

selector adapter 22. The figure does not show the complete terminal structure but is focused on the interface between the user terminal and the access selection adapter.

IP packets are exchanged between the access selector and the access adapter and these packets contain access information, reservation/release router configuration and access system resources. This information is either reported by the access network, which for example can broadcast it, or is this information requested by the access selector.

Wireless hints are reported to the access selector from the QoS controller 29 as shown by arrow 38.

10 The user terminal comprises an access manager 39 an associated layer 2-to-layer 3 translator 40 and the access selector 26. The access selector comprises a set of link independent QoS related software processes for access procedures collectively shown at 41.

15 The access adapter comprises a similar set of link independent QoS related software processes collectively shown at 42, an access manager 43 an associated layer 2-to-layer 3 translator 44, an access manager 45 an associated layer 2-to-layer 3 translator 46 and a translator 47 that translates layer2 triggers, which are access dependent, into access independent information.

20 Entities shown at ellipses with a thick border line operate on layer 2, while entities shown at ellipses with a thin border line operate at layer 3.

The abbreviation An defines a wireless access network onboard a vehicle, that is a first "hop" extending between the user terminal and the access selection adapter. The "n" in An indicates that it can there may be several such wireless access networks, such as Bluetooth, WLAN, onboard the vehicle. If there are no such onboard wireless networks, and the terminal connects to the access selection adapter 22 via a local wire based network, then no access managers 39 and 40 and corresponding translators are needed. Therefore these entities are shown with dashed lines.

30 The abbreviation Bn is a general definition of access between the access adapter and a land or space based access network, for example access network 21 in Fig. 1. The "n" in Bn indicates that it can there may be several such access networks. There is one access adaptor for each access network, and accordingly only one B-access

manager per access network, although the access manager in Fig 6 intimates there may be several access managers in one and the same access adapter because of the "n". Each one of the access managers 45 handle a respective access that use different access technologies, each such technology requiring a respective bearer
5 access manager. The access managers need to be installed and configured in accordance with the existent access networks.

An access manager, also called a bearer service manager, is an layer 2 (L2) entity, which establishes and maintains a wireless bearer service. An access manager can be complex unit and comprise a plurality of various L2 protocols and resource
10 handlers, but it can also be a simple unit, for example a medium access (MAC) layer.

The processes 41 and 42 describe protocol states defined as follows:

RH: Resource handling. A common resource management process that can request and or release resources from different access systems via respective access selection adapters.

15 **L2-LS:** L2-Link Status. A process that requests and/or receives L2 trigger information from the access selection adapter. Examples of L2 triggers are signal strength and quality.

NSIS: Next Step In Signaling. NSIS is responsible for the delivery of QoS information locally or end-to-end. The actual protocol implementing NSIS procedures may be
20 RSVP or an enhanced version of it.

CARD: Candidate Access Router Discovery is used for the request of access router capabilities from the network.

FHO: Fast Handover handles all interactions belonging to the IETF's FHO specification.

25 Table 1 below lists all messages with which the access selector processes interact with the access selector adapters.

Table 1
Access Selector messages

	Input messages	Output messages
L2-LS	Access Status	
CARD	CARD reply	CARD request
RH	Access (UMTS) ready Release (WLAN) ready	Attach Release (WLAN)
FHO	Proxy Router Advertisement Fast Binding Ack	Router Sol. For Proxy Fast Binding Update Fast Neighbour Advertisement
NSIS	Resv Path Resvconf	Path++ Resv++

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The access independent RH process is essential in order to reserve and or release access system resources independently of access technologies. Like other processes, the RH process is needed both in the access selector and in the access adapter. The RH process in the access selector requests for the attachment/resource release to/from the access system and returns an acknowledgment that this has occurred.

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The double headed arrow between the L2-LS processes means that is also possible for the access selector 26 to request the status of a link access.

Fig. 7 discloses the access selector which comprises access selector control logic 48, a preferred access selection result 49 and information 50 on the current access. There are three set of inputs to the control logic, two set of run time inputs and one set of configuration inputs. One set of run time inputs comprise the QoS profile from the user terminal and these are shown to the left at IU1-IU11. The QoS profile refers to desired characteristics of the access. The other set of run time inputs are the access status information provided from the access adaptors and are shown to the right at I11-I13, I21-I32 and I31-I33. The status information refers to characteristics

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offered by the respective access networks. At the top of the rectangle of the access selector control logic 48 configuration inputs w1-w3 and N1-N3 from the databases 28 and 37 are shown. The access selector logic comprises the access selector algorithm 33.

- 5 When resources are allocated in a network two kinds of inputs are of interest: Which are the characteristics of the traffic to be pumped into the network and which quality shall the traffic have. Parameters IU1-IU8 give a description of the traffic to be injected into the access network, while parameters IU9-IU11 refer to the QoS of the traffic.
- 10 In the example described below a simple access selection algorithm is described which uses parameters IU9-IU11 as desired QoS parameters for bit error rate, expected delay bound and packet loss ratio. These are matched against corresponding status information, bit error rate, expected delay bound (=transmission delay) and packet loss ratio, reported from the respective available networks. The
- 15 status information IU1-IU8 is indirectly included in the status information because the status information relate to traffic already existing in the respective access network. Therefore the example of the algorithm given below will only take notice of the QoS related parameters IU9-IU11 and its corresponding status information reported from the networks.
- 20 By matching the information given by access profile against the status information the control logic returns information on the access network that has the best matching or returns an indication that none of the available access networks matches the desired QoS profile. This result is given as the preferred access selection. The preferred access selection is compared against the current access and if the two
- 25 agree the access is not changed. If the two disagree the access is changed to the preferred access or, in case no access is matching the QoS profile, the current access is maintained.

Fig. 7 illustrates an example of a technology independent access selection algorithm that comprises three matching equations AC1, AC2 and AC3, one for each access

30 network, and an access selection function $f_a(\text{MAX}(AC1, AC2, AC3))$, where $i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, i$ being the number of available access networks. There is one matching function for each available access network. Output from the access logic is the result of the

access selection function $fa(\text{MAX}(AC1, AC2, AC3))$. In the access selection function $fa(AC_i)$ gives the index of the access system to be accessed; for example $fa(AC3)=3$ which is the access network 3. Thus access network 3 is selected.

The matching functions are similar and therefore only the calculation of AC1 is described. Available I11 (bit error rate) is subtracted from desired IU9 (bit error rate). The difference is normalized and weighted. The logarithm of the result is taken. Further available I12 (expected delay bound) is subtracted from desired IU10 (expected delay bound). The difference is normalized and weighted. The logarithm of the result is taken. Further available I13 (packet loss ratio) is subtracted from desired IU11 (packet loss). The difference is normalized and weighted. The logarithm of the result is taken. The three logarithms are added and AC1 results. The same procedures are repeated for matching functions AC2 and AC3 and the maximum of the three values AC1, AC2 and AC3 is selected as access network.

If there is no output, then there is no match between requested service and available QoS parameter information. No access is made but is deferred to a later time when there is a match. To achieve this, the QoS profile is stored in the user terminal. The access selector continues to receive status information from available networks or to request status information from these. At regular intervals, or from time to time, the access selector retrieves the stored QoS profile and compares it with current status information from the available access networks. When there is a match an access network is returned from the algorithm and the terminal is instructed to access it. The terminal will thus behave like it had a scheduling mechanism that schedules an access when the circumstances allow. For example if the user is onboard a vehicle that moves over areas where available access networks only allow a low bit rate, for example 64 kbit/s, and the user sends a request for download of streaming video, which according to its application's QoS profile requires a bandwidth of at least 500 kbit/s, then the access control logic will store the QoS profile and continue to monitor available access networks. When the vehicle approaches a large city, a suitable access network with the required characteristics is detected and the access selector will then automatically access this network and initiate a video streaming session.

The AC1 to AC3 functions are log functions for the reason that is illustrated in Fig. 9. If the difference between available and requested parameter information is positive a positive log difference value is achieved. If the positive difference increases the

positive log difference will increase only slightly and will have a minor influence on the positive part of the matching function. As an example, if the available bit rate greatly surpasses the requested bit rate this will only to a small degree affect the resulting ACi matching function as compared to the case when the available bit rate only slightly surpasses the requested bit rate.

On the other hand, and in opposition to this, if the difference between available and requested parameter information is negative, a negative log difference value results. If the negative difference increases the log difference value will increase heavily and will thus have a great influence on the negative part of the matching function.

Fig. 10 illustrates an implementation of the access technology 1 used in radio access network 19. UMTS (Universal Mobile Telecommunications System) is used as radio access network. The access technology used in this example is WCDMA (Code Division Multiple Access). UMTS supports high bit rate bearer services with managed QoS characteristics. Logically UMTS is divided into a radio access network UTRAN (UMTS Terrestrial Radio Access Network) 51 and a core network 52 connected with an open interface I_u . A packet domain Core Network functionality is logically implemented on two network nodes, the Serving GPRS Support Node SGSN 53 and the Gateway GPRS Support Node GGSN 54. GPRS is an acronym for General Packet Radio System. The UMTS network has an interface U_u towards the user terminal 18 and a standard interface G_i towards the IP based backbone network 21.

Fig. 11 illustrates a layered QoS bearer service structure in the UMTS network shown in Fig. 10. A bearer service describes how a network provides QoS. It is defined by a signaling protocol, transport in the user plane, and QoS management functions. An application 27 in the user terminal 18 signals end-to-end to a web server 25 connected to the backbone network 21. The situation is illustrated in Fig. 3 and is specialized to an UMTS network. The access adapter or wireless gateway 22 is in this case a PCMCIA card (Personal Computer Modular Card International Association) which the user has inserted into his lap top (user terminal). In an end-to-end bearer service 55 the IP protocol suite is used at layer 3.. Preferably IPv4 or IPv6 is used. Accordingly IP is used as a spanning layer i.e. a layer spanning all the entities 27, 18, 22, 51, 53, 54 and 25. It is thus possible for the application to communicate with the access selector, the web server or even an application resident in the web server. As indicated in the Figure Bluetooth or WLAN can be

used as bearer service between the user terminal and the access selection adapter. The QoS controller 30, translator 31 and access manager 32 in the access selection adapter 22 are shown as dashed ellipses. The layered structure makes it clear that the translator 31 translates messages and information from layer 2 to layer 3.

- 5 Although IP is described as spanning layer other technologies may in the future be used as spanning layer.

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